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Women in KL-Auschwitz, 1942-1945

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Women in KL-Auschwitz 1942-1945

*Women in KL-Auschwitz
1942-1945
Donna DiDomenico
Honors Thesis
Department of History
University of Richmond
Richmond, Virginia
April 2, 1992*

by
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Preface

#1. Make your case for
why women
A 2. Explain the problem
of sources and
of the Holocaust

The Third Reich's intentional murdering of twelve million people during World War II was certainly one of the most tragic and devastating events of the twentieth century. No one on the European continent was unaffected by Hitler's plan for a "genetically perfect" Aryan race. ~~using as evidence in the Holocaust~~ The wealth of literature on the Holocaust, expansive as it is, consists mostly of monographs on individual labor and death camps and personal testimonies (many written in Polish, German, Czech, and French) of male survivors. Women's experiences have largely been neglected; their stories are either mentioned as parts of chapters of larger works or are parts of works not yet translated into the English language. I have chosen to study the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau because it was the largest and involved women in every aspect of its diabolical horror. Since it was both a work camp and a death camp, the primary source material available is as diverse as it is extensive. It is therefore my intention to present a thesis that examines the types of experiences women had in the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.

My paper will ~~first consist of~~ ^{be a study of} an introductory history of Auschwitz. I will then ~~proceed to~~ categorize women's experiences as forced laborers, as prisoner functionaries, and as the subjects of medical experimentation. Finally, I will include a section elaborating on the immediate and horrible deaths the majority of women experienced upon arrival. These areas of study should interrelate aptly to provide a preliminary partial investigation of women in the Holocaust.

Setting the Stage

A History of KL-Auschwitz

In 1939, the small town of *Oswiecim* was quiet and serene. Located in the Cracow district between the Vistula and Sola Rivers in South-Western Poland, its 12,000 inhabitants peacefully labored as shopkeepers, businessmen, and farmers. Jews and gentiles lived harmoniously in tight-knit communities. Few people had ever heard of or visited the town, save the occasional tourist who would come to absorb a commanding view of the mountains or lush green forests. Suddenly, after September 1st, the town would never be the same. After the Nazis invaded Poland, the town was given the German name *Auschwitz*. Later, it would only be known to the world as a bloodstain on the map of Europe, as an infamous and diabolical place that became the graveyard of some three and a half million souls.¹

In 1940, Gestapo Inspector S.S. *Oberfuhrer* Wiegand proposed to establish a KL (*Konzentrationslager*) or concentration camp at Auschwitz for the purpose of incarcerating Polish and Russian political prisoners.² On April 27, 1940, *Reichsfuhrer* Heinrich Himmler, head of Adolf Hitler's *Schutzstaffel* or elite guard (also known as the *Waffen-S.S.*), signed the order that authorized the construction of the camp. With Rudolf Hoss as commandant, the first transport of Polish political prisoners arrived at the camp on June 14, 1940. It consisted of 728 persons with camp numbers from 31 to 758; the first thirty numbers belonged to Jews sent to Auschwitz by the town's mayor to help with construction. At its establishment, the camp consisted of 28 two-story buildings and housed 15,000 female and 13,000 male prisoners by 1942. Just three short years later, Auschwitz incarcerated 500,000 prisoners and had

¹ Hellman, Peter, ed. The Auschwitz Album- A Book Based Upon an Album Discovered by a Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili Meier. New York: Random House, 1981. vii.

² Smolen, Kazimierz. "The Concentration Camp Auschwitz." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982. 2.

systematically exterminated some three million people.³

The ideology behind the mass murdering was not new, however. Since the eighteenth century, ~~the German people had possessed~~ a hatred of certain "polluting elements" (mainly Jews and Slavs) of their Volk, or purely Germanic culture.⁴ In the 1930's, Adolf Hitler merely seized upon German disillusionment and promised his people a Reich that would rule for a thousand years. The first step to this glory, however, was to be the purification of society. The purges began as early as 1939, when Hitler ordered the "mercy killing" of patients in the Reich designated as incurable by physicians. The "T4 euthanasia program" was designed to discreetly weed out sickly undesirables. Those most often targeted for murder were elderly Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, mental patients, and "those socially unfit for life."⁵ Since these people were the scapegoats and, as Hitler claimed, "the sole cause of humiliation and defeat of the Fatherland in the Great War,"⁶ they were used to perfect the efficiency of mass murder. As Germany gained control over most of continental Europe in 1941, Hitler and the S.S. finally declared a kind of xenophobic open warfare on all political and social undesirables. The "final solution" to all of Germany's problems included the construction of death camps all over Eastern Europe. They were to be equipped with gas chambers using Zyklon-B insecticide and special ovens to burn all those who stood in the way of the "perfect Aryan Reich."

Brzezinka, or Birkenau (also known as Auschwitz II), was such a camp built in late 1941.⁷ Its primary function ~~was~~ to implement Hitler's "final solution." Birkenau ~~was the~~ death camp ~~which~~ housed Auschwitz's four main killing facilities, each of which was

³ Friedlander, Henry. "The Nazi Concentration Camps." In Human Responses to the Holocaust: Perpetrators and Victims, Bystanders and Resisters. Ed. Michael D. Ryan. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981. 47.

⁴ Mosse, George. The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964. 5.

⁵ Kogon, Eugen. The Theory and Practice of Hell. New York: Octagon Books, 1973. 200.

⁶ Ibid. 201.

⁷ Hellman, vii.

located in a "birch alley" of trees from which the camp's name was derived. A few months later, the camp at Buna-Monowitz, or Auschwitz III, was created to house prisoners whose primary function was hard slave labor at a nearby factory. The entire camp area, called the "camp interest zone," covered an area of forty square kilometers, or roughly thirty square miles.⁸

The first women prisoners were brought from the concentration camp Ravensbruck in Northern Germany to Auschwitz I (the main or base camp) on March 26, 1942.⁹ The transport consisted of 999 women who were ^{placed in} located in one part of the base camp, divided by a concrete wall from the rest of the area. They lived in cell blocks numbered one through ten. On August 16, 1942, all women were transferred to the recently built camp at Birkenau, to the so-called sector "B1a." The ^{population} strength of the women's camp then ^{increased} amounted to about 15,000 females. It grew steadily with time and in August 1944, there were 39,234 women prisoners. Except for a few hundred inmates who served as nurses in the "hospitals" or as the subjects of medical experimentation in Auschwitz I, Birkenau was the facility to which most females were sent.¹⁰

Late in the winter of 1944, as the Russian army advanced from the East, prisoners and deportees were exported or re-routed away from Auschwitz to other concentration camps in Germany and points West.¹¹ On January 27, 1945, most of Auschwitz's crematoriums, gas chambers and cell blocks were burned or destroyed by the Nazis as they fled from the allied invasion.¹² Perhaps the S.S. thought that the world would simply not believe what had happened; there would be rumors,

⁸ Smolen, 4.

⁹ Ibid. 6.

¹⁰ Micheels, Louis J., MD. Doctor #117641- A Holocaust Memoir. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989. 71.

¹¹ Muller, Filip. Eyewitness Auschwitz- Three Years in the Gas Chambers. New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1979. 54.

¹² Czech, Danuta. "Most Important Events in the History of the Concentration Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982. 216.

Women as Forced Laborers

Extermination Through Work

Out of the three and a half million people who were brought to KL-Auschwitz between 1940 and 1945, approximately 404,222 were "selected" by the S.S. to serve the Third Reich as laboring slaves; 271,373 men and 102,849 women filled these positions. Some 340,000, or 84% of that group perished within three months from overwork, exhaustion, disease, starvation, or cruel beatings sadistically inflicted upon them by the S.S.¹³ Consequently, being selected for work often amounted to nothing more than a grueling, prolonged, and agonizing death sentence.

Before 1942, all prisoners who arrived at Auschwitz were registered, tattooed with camp numbers, and forced to work for the Reich as slaves.¹⁴ After 1942, as more and more Jews were deported from Eastern Europe, a system of selection was implemented. As the "final solution" became a reality in Auschwitz II-Birkenau with the building and operation of its four killing facilities in December of 1942, the S.S. had to choose between those who would die immediately in the gas chambers and those who were able-bodied enough to be worked to death. Yet, the selection process really began for Hitler's "undesirables" long before they got to Auschwitz. Before reaching the camp, the victims often had to travel by train for up to six days from "ghettos" or deportation areas all around Europe. Each person, regardless of gender, nationality, age, or "crime" was allotted 200 grams of bread¹⁵ per day of travel before being locked in a railroad car with not fewer than one-hundred others. The entire car was given one covered bucket for sanitation purposes and another for drinking water. Each person could only take 50 kilograms¹⁶ of luggage which was crowded into the car with them.

¹³ Fejkiel, Wladyslaw. "Starvation in Auschwitz." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982. 130.

¹⁴ Smolen, 10.

¹⁵ about 7 ounces or 4 to 5 slices

¹⁶ about 115 lbs.

Those not strong enough died en route. Those who survived transportation to 'Konzentrationslager Auschwitz were usually dying of thirst and were promised water in exchange for unwavering complacency.¹⁷

After being unloaded from the trains, the victims were separated by gender into (tow) groups of five columns each on the selection or *Juden* ramp. Here, the S.S. officer in charge would select those who were to go to the right (for work) or to the left (for immediate gassing). Out of a single transport, which could carry as many as 2,500 people, only 15 to 25% would be "spared."¹⁸ Selection never spared the lives of the very old or the very young. The minimum age to be considered for labor was fifteen, although the Nazis would take a girl or a boy as young as twelve depending on the need for slaves, the whim of the selector, luck, and sometimes fast thinking. Since proof of age was never asked for, a young child who looked older would often be drafted for a work detail. S.S. officers would also, from time to time, select a child to be their *pipl* or personal page. Furthermore, there was no maximum age to be selected for work as long as one looked healthy, strong, and robust. Some older men and women were spared because they possessed special skills. Doctors, nurses, and musicians, for example, were more likely to be selected for work than to be gassed, provided that they were not already debilitated in any way.¹⁹

Selection for women captives was an even more dangerous experience. Because of the notion that they were the "softer sex" and because women often arrived at Auschwitz pregnant or with young children clinging to their skirts, they were twice as likely as men to be selected for immediate gassing.²⁰ Women who were overweight or dressed in baggy clothing were often ^{misunderstood} mistaken for pregnant and sent to the left. Even proximity to children ^{that} were not one's own could be life-threatening. One survivor,

¹⁷ Hellman, xix.

¹⁸ Smolen, 10.

¹⁹ Micheels, 65.

²⁰ Smolen, 12.

Fannie Schwimmer of Bilke, Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia in Eastern Poland, was holding the infant child of her sister Leah during selection. She was approached by a "Canada" member²¹ who knew by her beautiful uncovered black hair that she was unmarried.²² He whispered to her to give the child back to its mother. Unaware of the consequence, Fannie did so. She was sent to the right, while Leah with the infant child in her arms, was sent to the left.

All women selected for work were then taken to the "sauna" in Birkenau where they would be bathed, deloused, shaved of all hair, and tattooed, usually on the left forearm. Bertha Ferderber-Salz in her testimony And The Sun Kept Shining described the experience:

A group of Slovakian girls stood at the entrance to the bath-house holding scissors and razor blades...from afar we could see the girls making careful body checks, poking around in women's mouths and examining the soles of their feet, in case anyone had attached paper money to them. One of them cut the hair off our heads, a second shaved the hair from our bodies, while a third held a painter's brush, which she dipped in some kind of liquid and daubed the shaven parts of our bodies. Then we were told to dip our shoes in a stinking black liquid and to leave by the back door.²³

Afterwards, the women went through "quarantine" and were assigned to particular cell blocks which were encircled by electrified barbed-wire fences. During this time, the S.S. taught their female captives how to report to superiors and how to sing various marching songs. In what the S.S. referred to as "sport exercises," the Nazi officers made the women crawl on the ground while they beat them. The S.S. performed this ritual to "weed out" those who were not "fit." Many casualties and even deaths were the norm.²⁴

Those women "fortunate" enough to survive the initial quarantine sessions were

²¹ a prisoner functionary who sorted through the baggage of the victims to extract riches for the Reich

²² in the tradition of Orthodox Judaism, a wife's hair is covered

²³ Ferderber-Salz, Bertha. And the Sun Kept Shining. New York: Holocaust Library, Inc., 1980. 40.

²⁴ Smolen, 12.

then given striped uniforms and assigned to work squads with anywhere from a few to several hundred others. Special insignias were then sewn on the upper-left-hand corner of the women's dresses. Roughly 70% of the female prisoners were Jewish and wore Stars of David made of yellow triangles crossed with red triangles. Another 25% of the women were Gypsies, Russians, and Slavs. They wore black triangles with the letter Z (*Zigeuner*) or R (*Russe*) sewn on it. The remaining 5% of the women were incarcerated for being "politically vocal or active against the Reich and the Fuhrer." They wore red or green triangles, depending on the nature of their "crime."²⁵

A woman's "offense," however, determined much more than just her insignia. A definite hierarchy existed among the women, which influenced every aspect of their stay at Auschwitz. Jewish women were considered "filthy" and occupied the lowest rung on the ladder of power and privilege.²⁶ Gypsies and Slavs fared a little better depending on how "Aryan" they looked, how willing they were to adopt German ideals and attitudes, what part of Europe they came from, and what language they spoke. By and far, the women with the most power and privilege were those incarcerated for being against the Reich. Often, these women were German and, according to survivor Zofia Posmysz:

were on the best of terms with the S.S. men since they spoke the same language. They would also often render services of another kind to the officers and would become the most powerful and influential women in the camp.²⁷

Furthermore, a woman's power was mainly determined by two factors: how much food she received and what kind of work she performed.

The S.S. officers assigned women to squads, serving either the administration of the camp, the building and enlarging of the camp and its farms, or leased them out to

²⁵ Kogon, 39.

²⁶ Micheels, 89.

²⁷ Posmysz, Zofia. "Sangerin." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982. 142.

private firms as slave labor.²⁸ (The first category was mostly composed of non-Jewish women who were known as prisoner functionaries. Since these women helped to run the camp and its facilities, they were three times more likely to survive than female prisoners in the latter two categories.²⁹) The forced laborers not involved with the camp administration ~~were essentially stripped of their femininity as they were used to perform menial and degrading slave tasks; all notions of women being unable to perform certain duties because of their gender were dismissed by the Nazis.~~ Women often worked an eighteen-hour day hauling coal trucks, cleaning out ponds, draining swamps, and tending farmlands. Zofia Posmysz described her experience as a slave-laborer:

Trees had been felled in the wood in Spring but the trunks were not removed. They lay almost half covered by the earth. We had to raise them up, carry them to a spot several scores of meters farther, and stack them into cords. And all this had to be done with our bare hands. There were no tools of any kind. The trunks were five and ten meters long and they kept slipping from our hands.³⁰

The system of using women as forced laborers was designed to exterminate them within three months.³¹ ~~Their deaths resulted from physical exhaustion, starvation, and disease.~~ The average caloric intake of the "Musselmen" or "Moslems"³² was less than 1000 per day. ~~The daily ration for women contained about 15 grams of protein, 20 grams of fat, and 300 grams of carbohydrate.~~³³ "The low calorie value of the food stuffs were of poor quality. They mainly contained vegetables of low nourishing value, generally used for fodder."³⁴ Magda Szabo, a Transylvanian deportee who worked in

²⁸ Smolen, 12.

²⁹ Kogon, 42.

³⁰ Posmysz, 147.

³¹ Fejkiel, "Starvation in Auschwitz." 130.

³² Prisoners who were used for heavy labor received these names because, when observed from afar, they were hunched over like praying Arabs. This was the origin of the camp expression denoting starving people.

³³ Fejkiel, "Starvation in Auschwitz." 130.

³⁴ Ibid, 131.

the kitchen described the "Muslim" fare:

Three times a day, the women, if you could call them that, received their rations. Ersatz coffee was served in the morning, soup at noon, bread with margarine or sugar-beet jam, and on rare occasions, a bit of sausage in the evening. The soup was a few potatoes with a bit of margarine in a 75-gallon vat. We had to pour something in and stir, a sort of horse-chestnut flour with a nasty taste. It was the camp-soup flavor.³⁵

Another prisoner, Olga Lengyel who was quartered in hut 27 in Birkenau and performed pond-cleaning duties and swamp-draining for the Nazis had this to say about the soup:

From it [the soup] we fished buttons, tufts of hair, rags, tin cans, kegs, and even mice. One day somebody found a tiny metal sewing kit containing thread and an assortment of needles.³⁶

She also described the ravishing hunger and desperation of the women in her block:

Only one red enameled bowl was available for each twenty persons in my hut. So a system was devised by which a given number of gulps was allotted to each woman under the "glaring eyes" of her neighbors...jealously they counted every mouthful and watched the slightest movement of her Adam's apple until her share was consumed. In this fashion, the bowl was passed along nineteen times until it was empty.³⁷

Needless to say, the lack of nutrients of the women's diet caused many health-related problems. The average weight of the female laborers was 90 to 100 pounds.³⁸ "Women who were once robust and sensual turned into walking skeletons overnight."³⁹ Most stopped menstruation completely due to the lack of body fat. Those lucky enough to "still be women" were devoid of feminine products: "the burdock leaves were but poor substitutes for sanitary pads."⁴⁰ Bodily fluids leaked out everywhere due to severe cases of diarrhea and dysentery. The lack of sanitation facilities in

³⁵ Hellman, 125.

³⁶ Lengyel, Olga. Five Chimneys: The Story of Auschwitz. Chicago, Illinois: Ziff-Davis, 1947. 50.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Perl, Gisella. I Was A Doctor In Auschwitz. New York: International Universities Press, 1948. 12.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Posmysz, 139.

Birkenau, "along with the dirt, lice, fleas, and scabies that were the constant companions of the Musselmen"⁴¹ resulted in severe epidemics. Typhus and tuberculosis often claimed the lives of 1000 women per day in 1944. Those who got too ill to work were sent to the camp "hospitals" which were merely way stations of the road to the gas chambers. The "hospital huts served more to isolate sick patients than to make them well."⁴²

Diseases spread rapidly among the already-weakened women who were forced to sleep next to each other like cordwood. Birkenau was composed of 250 barracks that were meant to house 52 horses each. The Nazis filled them with 800 to 1000 women each.⁴³ Women could not avoid soiling each other with the almost constant flow of diarrhea, pus, and blood. As Helina Birenbaum pointed out, various diseases were also life-threatening because they forced women to break rules:

Many women with diarrhea relieved themselves in soup bowls or the pans for "coffee;" then they hid the utensils under the mattress to avoid the punishment threatening them for doing so; twenty-five strokes on the bare buttocks, or kneeling all night long on sharp gravel while holding up bricks. These punishments often ended in the death of the "guilty."⁴⁴

Ordinarily, the women were allowed to relieve themselves twice a day in the hut used for such a purpose:

There was one latrine for thirty to thirty-two thousand women and we were permitted to use it only at certain hours of the day. We stood in line to get into this tiny building, knee-deep in human excrement. As we all suffered from dysentery, we could rarely wait until our turn came, and soiled our ragged clothes, which never came off our bodies, thus adding to the horror of our existence by the terrible smell which surrounded us like a cloud. The latrine consisted of a deep ditch with planks thrown across it at certain intervals. We squatted on these planks like birds perched on telegraph wire, so close together that we could not help soiling one another.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Fejkiel, "Starvation in Auschwitz." 121.

⁴² Micheels, 112.

⁴³ Smolen, 5.

⁴⁴ Birenbaum, Halina. Hope Is The Last To Die. New York: Twane Publishers, 1971. 134.

⁴⁵ Perl, 33.

Despite all the horrid circumstances, however, "there was something specially unique about the women: we bonded and watched out for one another like sisters... we had to, it was the only way to survive."⁴⁶ The survival psychology of most concentration camp prisoners led to three basic forms of adjustment: "to remain a lone wolf; to join a group; or to appear in the guise of a political partisan."⁴⁷ The first and third behavioral patterns were typical among the men, while "women tended to be more cohesive and supportive of each other in a combined effort to survive."⁴⁸ One survivor, Gerda Weissman Klein, recalled how she and her fellow cell-mates were being punished by the S.S. ^{who tormented them} ~~they were not allowed to sleep one night on pain of death:~~

"Ilse!" I shook her.

"Leave me alone!" she protested.

"Ilse!" I shouted. "Wake up. You are not going to sleep!"

She was awake now. I rubbed her face, her stiff hands. I called to Suse and Liesel. They responded. We passed the word around not to sleep...we did everything we could think of to keep each other awake and encouraged.⁴⁹

Sometimes, collective survival took the form of one group helping another, as when a work squad had to carry sacks of cement from the storeroom to a building site:

I was equal to the job, but working with us were weaker women who grew exhausted after a few trips. The younger of us, myself included, pitched in to help them. We had agreed among our group that we would help one another to whatever extent was possible, rather than surrender to the dog-eat-dog philosophy which poisoned the minds of some prisoners.⁵⁰

Sometimes, "help came collectively, unplanned, and uncalled for, where and when it was needed"⁵¹ as noted by survivor Seweryna Szmaglewska:

⁴⁶ Hart, Kitty. I Am Alive. New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1962. 50.

⁴⁷ Kogon, 279.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 280.

⁴⁹ Klein, Gerda Weissman. All But My Life. New York: Hilland Wang, 1957. 188.

⁵⁰ Weinstock, Eugena. Beyond the Last Path. New York: Boni and Gaer, 1947. 154.

⁵¹ Des Pres, Terrence. The Survivor- An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. 136.

For example, five women are pushing a conveyor car loaded to the brim with gravel...the car jumps the track...then it gets stuck in the sand. The women stop, completely helpless. Fortunately the chief is not around. All efforts to replace the car on the tracks are fruitless; the heavy-laden car will not budge and the chief may appear at any moment. A clandestine congregating begins. Stealthily, bent figures sneak toward the derailed car from all directions: the women who work on the mound of sand, those who level the gravel, a group just returned from delivering a track. A common exertion of arms and backs raised the car, the spades dig into the sand under the wheels and heave-- and the loaded car moves, shivers. Fear gives strength to the workers. With more pushing, one wheel is on the track. A Kapo⁵² comes rushing from afar, she has noticed people missing at various points of work. But before she can get there, one more tug, one more push-- and the gravel-laden conveyor car proceeds smoothly along the tracks.⁵³

Often, women even shared their most precious possessions-- scraps of food-- ~~with~~ *each other* on a massive level:

There are days when the chief is not here. He bolts the barracks and leaves complete freedom to the locked-in women. These are wonderful days. A small bribe changes Inga [the Kapo] into an angel, graciously open to any further proofs of friendship. From hiding places pots, saucepans, frying pans appear. Someone has potatoes, somebody else a ration of margarine, another has onions, and somebody else a spoonful of flour for gravy...on the top of the stove, no larger than twenty square inches, fifty women do their cooking, working...sharing in accord and harmony.⁵⁴

Yet, even among women, ^{*impaired*} the irrepressible urges toward decency and care ~~were~~ *tempered by the pursuit of self-interest*. The feminine sense of community, however prevalent, was never absolute. Ella Lingens-Reiner described the attitude of one of her fellow prisoners:

Ena Weiss, our chief doctor-- one of the most intelligent, gifted, and eminent Jewish women in the camp-- once defined her attitude thus, in sarcastic rejection of fulsome flattery and at the same time with brutal frankness: "How did I keep alive in Auschwitz? My principle is: myself first, second, and third. Then nothing. Then myself again-- and then all the others." This formula expressed only one principle which was possible for Jews who intended-- almost insanely intended-- to survive

⁵² a Kapo was a prisoner functionary who was in charge of other prisoners

⁵³ Szmaglewska, Seweryna. Smoke Over Birkenau. New York: Henry Holt, 1947. 20-21.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 100.

Auschwitz. Yet, because this woman had the icy wisdom and strength to accept the principle, she kept for herself a position in which she could do something for the Jews. Hardly anybody else in the camp did as much for them and saved so many lives as she did.⁵⁵

The unique sense of community among the female prisoners, however, fostered much more than just a sense of social security. Pockets of resistance often sprang up among the tightly-knit groups of women in Birkenau. "They served as crucial links in the chains of informational networks, prisoner undergrounds, and black markets from the outside world."⁵⁶ Olga Lengyel ~~described how the~~ ^{explained:}

Oppression as violent as that under which we lived automatically provoked resistance. Our entire existence in the camp was marked by it. When the employees of "Canada" detoured items destined for Germany to the benefit of their fellow internees, it was resistance. When labourers at the spinning mills dared to slacken their working pace, it was resistance. When at Christmas we organized a little "festival" under the noses of our masters, it was resistance. When, clandestinely, we passed letters from one camp to another, it was resistance. When we endeavored, and sometimes with success, to reunite two members of the same family-- for example, by substituting one internee for another in a gang of stretcher bearers-- it was resistance.⁵⁷

Miraculously enough, even some women who were spending their last moments on earth waiting for their turn in the gas chamber displayed courageous and inspiring acts of resistance:

Once, a group of naked prisoners about to enter the gas chamber stood lined up in front of it. In some way the commanding S.S. officer learned that one of the women prisoners had been a dancer. So he ordered her to dance for him. She did, and as she danced, she approached him, seized his gun, and shot him down. She too was immediately shot to death.⁵⁸

Yet, despite the greatest of odds and under the most terrifying of circumstances, the

⁵⁵ Lingens-Reiner, Ella. Prisoners of Fear. London, England: Victor Gollancz, 1948.

⁵⁶ Garlinski, Jozef. Fighting Auschwitz- The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp. London, England: Julian Friedmann Publishers Ltd., 1975. 70.

⁵⁷ Lengyel, 154.

⁵⁸ Bettelheim, Bruno. "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations." In the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Volume 38, No. 4, October 1943. 264-265.

female laboring slaves of Auschwitz-Birkenau managed to retain their dignity, pride, and most importantly their will to live and bear witness. "Never again" became their rallying cry, freedom their only hope. Gerda Weissman Klein summed up her camp experience:

I was now an old-timer, resistant to pain and cold; inured to beating, opprobrium, and heavy labor; insensitive to pain and unhappiness. All I retained was a newspaperman's greedy curiosity, the desire to see and find out everything, to ingrain in my memory this Dantesque world.⁵⁹

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⁵⁹ Klein, 253.

Women as Prisoner Functionaries

Power and Privilege

The S.S. frequently selected many women who arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau to assist them in the administration and operation of the camp. These "lucky" women were often three times more likely to survive their imprisonment than those who were drafted for slave labor serving either the building and enlarging of the camp and its farms or private factories and firms.⁶⁰ In a way, the prisoner functionaries were a necessary and integral part of the camp's existence; without them, the machinery of death and destruction would simply grind to a halt. Because the Nazis realized their importance, these women occupied the top rungs on the ladder of camp power and privilege.

There were two basic sub-categories of administrators: those who served the S.S. directly and those who worked with and for the other prisoners. The former category consisted of select women who worked at the so-called "important jobs" ~~like~~ ^{like} helping in the kitchens, cleaning the S.S. offices and barracks, washing the S.S. laundry, working in the camp brothel, and occasionally even as doctors and medical research assistants. The latter category, which involved more prisoners than the first, included women who worked in the camp "hospitals" as nurses and aids,⁶¹ in the prisoner cell-blocks as Kapos or overseers of many slave-laborers, as translators, in the "Canada" brigade sorting through the luggage of those victimized by the Nazis to extract riches for the Reich, and even as musicians in the camp orchestra.⁶²

Most administrator positions were held by women and men who were non-Jews. Survivor Dr. Louis J. Micheels commented on the composition of the prisoner-functionary work force:

⁶⁰ Kraus, 76.

⁶¹ these women often had little or no formal medical training or education

⁶² Micheels, 91.

It again became clear to me that Jews, about half the camp's population,⁶³ were the pariahs of the camp. The rest were Poles, Germans, Czechoslovaks, Russians, and a few West Europeans. With very few exceptions, none of the important jobs were held by a Jew. Most of the Kapos, except those in the hospital, were Germans sentenced for serious crimes like armed robbery or murder. The kitchen workers and other key jobholders were German and Polish non-Jews.⁶⁴

There were, however, a higher concentration of Jewish women working in the camp laundry due to the S.S. notion that "filth should work with filth." Because of such a philosophy, Jewish women were often given the most undesirable camp functions. Lili Jacob, who arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau on May 21, 1944 at the age of eighteen, for example, was assigned to the *Scheisskommando*, or the squad that hauled ^{carriage} wagons and emptied latrines ^{out} as well as the night buckets kept at the back of each hut. The S.S. would often beat Lili because of her stench, a punishment which resulted in permanent damage to her back from the blows of an S.S. guard's rifle butt. Lili also contracted typhus several times during her imprisonment because she had such "lucky" work.⁶⁵

Another horrible camp-functionary job that ~~was~~ performed by Jewish women⁶⁷ was that of the "heaven commando." The Nazis fed and clothed these women like queens. They were even given all the so-called pleasures of civilian life. Their only duty was to help with the collection and transport of corpses that died from overwork from the camp to the crematoria. This job, however, mandated that the "volunteer" who performed the duty give up her life at the end of exactly three months by a method dictated by the S.S. These women often suffered fates worse than death when their time was up at the the sadistic hands of the Nazi officers. Many were even tossed on top of the burning flesh in the crematorium while still alive.⁶⁶

Perhaps one of the worst jobs performed by the female prisoner-functionaries

⁶³ he included male prisoners as well in his estimate

⁶⁴ Ibid, 74.

⁶⁵ Helman, xix.

⁶⁶ Delbo, Charlotte. None of Us Will Return. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1968. 57.

was that of the *Sonderkommando*. These women and men worked in the crematoria and gas chambers, collecting, removing, and incinerating the corpses of their fellow countrymen. Many prisoners simply went insane from the sight and smell of their horrid task, especially during the Hungarian deportations of 1944, when all four of Birkenau's killing facilities were operational twenty-four hours per day.⁶⁷

~~Yet~~ ^{Female prisoners were} most women were given bearable jobs that were ^{earned} ~~accompanied by~~ special life-extending privileges ^{because they made} for the "indispensable" ~~nature of their roles~~. Survivor Dr. Gisella Perl, for example, who worked as a doctor in the camp hospital, ~~commented on~~ ~~how~~

if you worked inside, as I did, life was not completely intolerable. The majority of the prisoners, however, especially the Jews, worked on the outside construction jobs. These nobody could survive for very long; they were a slow death sentence.⁶⁸

In addition to her luxury of remaining indoors, Perl and prisoner functionaries like her were often free to work away from the constant gaze of their S.S. masters and free from the formality of roll calls:

In this situation I saw some hope for surviving. The doctor under whom I worked was very helpful; he cared about the patients and seemed to have considerable experience in camp life. We had little to do with other parts of the camp. We even had our own informal morning and evening roll calls: ten or fifteen people would gather between the blocks of the hospital nonchalantly. There was none of the rigid drill atmosphere of the rest of the camp, in which even the bodies of inmates who had died while working had to be carried to roll call.⁶⁹

~~Other privileges would include~~ ^{These women also had} having access to showers and a locked latrine for one, being able to rest for informal "coffee breaks," and the luxury to choose the bunk with the least amount of fleas in rooms that housed fewer than sixteen women.⁷⁰ Those women who worked in the "hospitals" frequently kept up their strength and body

⁶⁷ Muller, 12.

⁶⁸ Perl, 83.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 70.

⁷⁰ Gitta, Sereny. Into That Darkness. New York: McGraw Hill, 1974. 22.

weight enough to "still be women." For them, the dried leaves used by the Musselmen as sanitary pads were replaced by bits of stolen cloth or cotton.

Of course the most valuable attainment was that of better quality and quantity food rations. Among all the prisoner functionaries, bread was the main currency, the ultimate symbol of power and status, and the only means of survival. There was no specific or recurring items of food that were granted to these women, yet those who served the S.S. directly, for example, could expect at least two bowls of soup and frequently ^a sort of farina as well. Sometimes the female inmates would even receive bits of leftover meat or sausage from the S.S., depending on how "friendly" relations were with their Nazi masters.⁷¹ Olga Lengyel, a young doctor sent to Auschwitz for being an opponent of the Reich, for example, received many privileges for looking like an Aryan, being non-Jewish, and for having a unique relationship with Dr. Klein, Dr. Joseph Mengele's predecessor as chief-doctor of Birkenau. He was Rumanian, ~~a~~ ^{who} volunteer in the S.S. and had served in Auschwitz since December of 1942. He struck up a friendship with Olga, who, like him, came from Transylvania. He was able to have her appointed to work at the women's infirmary and "tried to establish a cordial relationship."⁷² Even Kapos and members of the "Canada" brigade often received an extra ration of tea or soup and sometimes even low-grade beef or horse meat. In fact, the average total caloric intake of the women who served as camp functionaries was often as high as 1600 per day.⁷³

The additional food rations and "luxuries" of the prisoner functionaries often aided their survival in other ways. Imitation of S.S. behavior was typical of life in the camps, and large numbers of women benefited because their influence was secretly used in ways which assisted the general struggle for life. Even small jobs like working as a locksmith wove into the larger fabric of resistance:

⁷¹ Perl, 70.

⁷² Lengyel, 63.

⁷³ Fejkiel, "Starvation in Auschwitz." 130.

*women
locksmiths!
unlike men!*

we had access to more and better food, and were able to keep ourselves clean; we had sufficient clothing and footwear. In due time ~~were~~ were able to assist other prisoners...we locksmiths had special passes from the camp authorities. With these we were able to go outside the camp and also to visit other camps at Birkenau...Often enough we merely pretended to work. Many were the good door handles and locks that we unscrewed and screwed up again at the approach of an S.S. man. If we were to work effectively as contacts between the various resistance groups, it was essential that we should be able to hang about in this way, especially when we needed information from other camps or when something unusual was going on.⁷⁴

Although most prisoner functionaries were in positions to help out those less fortunate, the women who served as administrators, like their Musselman sisters, wove an especially cohesive network of aid and assistance. Sometimes it was aid individually given, as in the case of a girl in Birkenau who used to bring coffee to the sick from the potato-peeling room; she risked immediate death if her absence was discovered by the S.S. Other times, collective attempts at reducing pain and suffering were made as in the case of a group of women who served on the hospital staff:

In many of the Nazi camps, women who gave birth were automatically sent with their children to the ovens. One day we decided we had been weak long enough. We must at least save the mothers. To carry out our plan, we would have to make the infants pass for stillborn. The pain of such decisions was the price which members of the resistance had to pay, just to salvage something rather than nothing in a world where, without this kind of hard choice, all would have died. And so, the Germans succeeded in making murderers of even us. To this day the picture of those murdered babies haunts me...the only meager consolation is that by these murders we saved the mothers. Without our intervention they would have been thrown into the crematory ovens while still alive.⁷⁵

Even the Kapo women, who were often unduly harsh on the female prisoners ~~they were in charge of~~ when under the gaze of an S.S. officer, had a humane side in the absence of their masters. Survivor Micheline Maurel told of how her life was saved by such a seemingly brutal woman:

⁷⁴ Kraus, 2.

⁷⁵ Lengyel, 99-100.

One morning...the *officerine* beat me...shouting that she was going to send me to my death. After she had left, the *blockhova*,⁷⁶ a usually brutish and nasty woman, hurried over and took me into another ward. She put me in a bunk with the light behind me and pinned a new chart at its foot. In this way, I was able to pass for another patient.⁷⁷

Consequently, women who served as prisoner functionaries managed to retain their sense of dignity by living as humanely as possible under horrible conditions. They strived to help themselves and one another while fostering survival ideologies and encouraging networks of resistance unique among the female prisoners. Solidarity was quite prevalent, as those put in "privileged" positions helped their sisters with whatever "power" they could exercise within the hierarchy of race, religion, and ethnicity.

⁷⁶ a prisoner functionary in charge of a cell-block of 800 to 1000 women

⁷⁷ Maurel, Micheline. An Ordinary Camp. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958. 51.

Women as Victims

Nazi Medicine and Experimentation

Women who were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau were, on occasion, neither sent to the gas-chambers nor selected for work. The third possible fate of women was often worse than the other two; they could become the victims of Nazi medicine. The concentration-camp "doctors" often performed experiments that supported Hitler's plan for a genetically pure and perfect Aryan race. The purpose of medicine was no longer to help human beings, but rather to find every possible means of helping the "chosen race" of Aryans dominate the so-called "inferior races" of the world.⁷⁸ But in order to predicate Aryan superiority, the Nazis had to scientifically demonstrate how the other races were genetically inferior. ^{Denying} The influence of external surroundings, ^{of} education, and ^{of} social conditions on the ~~composition~~ ^{doctrine of} "racial psychologies" was ~~denied~~. ^{Instead, the Nazis believed that many} Jews, for example, were not wealthy because they were shrewd businessmen, but rather because of ~~heredity~~ ^{and} certain money-hording traits that were genetically inscribed. ^{It was a theory that could be demonstrated scientifically, the racial attitude of the Nazi doctrine would have a sound basis and would eventually become acceptable by other world powers.}⁷⁹

The unfortunate consequence of such a twisted aim was the total disregard and contempt for human life. The Hippocratic Oath was ~~virtually~~ ^{completely} nullified as men and women simply became "human material" for research. This ideology was nowhere more prevalent than in the diary of S.S. Doctor Kremer. Two entries in particular illustrate the warped philosophy:

October 17, 1942. Present at corporal punishment and eleven executions. Withdrew fresh living material, liver, eyes, spleen, and pancreas after an

⁷⁸ Aziz, Philippe. Karl Brandt. The Third Reich's Man In White. Vol. 1 of Doctors of Death. Geneva: Ferni Publishers, 1976. 38.

⁷⁹ Aziz, Philippe. Joseph Mengele. The Evil Doctor. Vol. 2 of Doctors of Death. Geneva: Ferni Publishers, 1976. 80.

injection of pilocarpine.⁸⁰

and on

November 13, 1942. Living material, liver, spleen, and pancreas taken from Jewish prisoner, 18 years old, affected by atrophy.⁸¹ First took photo of him.⁸²

= then samples 2 others.

~~Most~~ Nazi experiments were either conducted outside the living person (in vitro), within the living person (in vivo), or upon corpses ^{all} and were "justified" under a sick rationality. Some were even done to study the effects of high altitudes, freezing temperatures, poisons, drugs, x-rays, and bone-transplants.⁸³ ~~Yet~~ ⁱⁿ many S.S. doctors ^{would} often performed sadistic and unnecessary experiments upon women in Auschwitz for the sheer pleasure of torture or to satiate their twisted curiosities about the limits and capacities for human suffering.

Women were initially selected to be the "guinea pigs" of the S.S. while on the *Judenramp* by the rather handsome thirty-two year old chief-doctor of Auschwitz. Born in Gunzburg, Bavaria on March 16, 1911, Dr. Joseph Mengele obtained his medical diploma in 1938. After joining the Fuhrer's elite guard, he was appointed to the Institute of Biological Heredity and Race Hygiene at Frankfurt. At the onset of World War II, he requested to be sent to Auschwitz rather than the Russian military front. Mengele arrived at the camp in May of 1943. He soon replaced Dr. Klein as chief-doctor for his "superior skills and devotion to the reich."⁸⁴ The very name of the most infamous "angel of death" struck fear into the hearts of his victims; ~~the man~~ ^{he} with a single gesture of the hand to the right or to the left, decided the life or death of

⁸⁰ pilocarpine is an alkaloid extracted from the leaves of the jaborandi plant and used in medicine to stimulate sweating or to contract the pupil of the eye

⁸¹ atrophy is a wasting away, esp. of body tissue, an organ, or the failure of an organ or part to grow or develop because of insufficient nutrition

⁸² Ibid, 72.

⁸³ Fejkiel, Wladyslaw. "Ethical and Legal Limits of Experimentation in Medicine in Connection With Professor Clauberg's Affair." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982. 99.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 78.

thousands of women on the selection ramp while coldly whistling opera arias from Wagner.

Dr. Mengele's predilection was for the women's camp because the specific problems of the female gender interested him highly. In fact, most of his favorite "subject material" had to fulfill the following stipulations: complete sexual maturity (17 to 40 years of age, preferably from 20 to 30), well-built, well-nourished if possible, menstruating regularly, preferably the mothers of several children (this proved their fecundity), and generally in good health. Female dwarfs or giants, or the mothers of twins especially interested the doctor. These women were

separated from the rest, sent to the right, and allowed to wear their civilian clothes. They were taken by guards to huts specially chosen for them and certain modifications of treatment were admitted. Food was good, bunks were comfortable. They had washing facilities and were well-treated.⁸⁵

Mengele was a master of manipulation and deceit. He provided every comfort to his women to "compensate" for the horrible atrocities he would subject them to later on. "Mengele's children" as they were called (regardless of their age) were even allowed outside of the camp for supervised walks and to pick wild flowers. Unaware of their fates, these women and children often called him "Uncle Mengele."⁸⁶

Yet Dr. Mengele performed some of the most horrible and frightening experiments on those who grew to trust and love him. Of special interest to him were twins and their mothers. The "doctor of death" was ^{interested in} partially interested in the perfection and proliferation of the Aryan race, ^{but more so in} and was partially interested in rising to fame within the Reich. The "mastery of the reproductive mechanism" would enable German women infallibly to give birth to twins...what power for the Aryan race which would, henceforth, be capable of reproducing twice as fast as other races."⁸⁷ In order to

⁸⁵ Lingens-Reiner, 118.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 120.

⁸⁷ Aziz, Joseph Mengele, The Evil Doctor, 117.

achieve this "esteemed" goal, Dr. Mengele took blood and urine samples from his current "patients" every twelve hours, leaving his victims flecked with bruises from the injections. ~~Worse yet, he~~ ^{Electric} subjected the female twins, who were living proof of the importance of heredity, to shock treatments, skin grafts, artificial insemination, uterine operations and scrapings, ^{in order} to observe their effects on the twinning phenomena. Many little girls were injected into the eyes and heart with hypodermics of phenol⁸⁸, phenolphthalein⁸⁹, and brymothol-blue⁹⁰ to see if their eye and hair color could be turned to the desired "Aryan" color. These treatments often killed the girls immediately ^{and in} excruciating pain. The Nazis later used phenol injections to aid in the "final solution." All patients who died from experimentation were given falsified death certificates with fictionalized diagnoses, ^{and} so the number of Mengele's victims can only be estimated at some 10,000 women and children from 1943 to 1945.⁹¹

Dr. Joseph Mengele, however, was not to take all of the credit for experimentation on women and children. Another S.S. doctor, based in the only women's block in Auschwitz I, specialized in the area of "negative demography," "the new science," or simply mass sterilization. Dr. D. Carl Clauberg was a popular gynecologist before the war. He was known for his successful fertility procedures to help ^{infertile} "barren" German women give birth. Upon request, he too was sent to Auschwitz in 1942. His sole purpose was "to find new methods and techniques of mass sterilization of women in the occupied countries...to find preparatory steps toward genocide."⁹² Block #10 in Auschwitz I was placed at the Professor's disposal. It was ^{not a separate building} isolated from the rest of the camp and formed one unit together with the well-known

⁸⁸ phenol is a white crystalline compound produced from coal tar and is used in making explosives and synthetic resins and it is a strong corrosive poison commonly called carbolic acid. *My question?*

⁸⁹ phenolphthalein is a white to pale-yellow crystalline powder used as a laxative, in making dyes, and as an acid-base indicator in chemical analysis

⁹⁰ brymothol -blue is a chemical liquid that is blue until exposed to carbon dioxide when it turns to a bright yellow

⁹¹ Fertig, Howard. Nazi Medicine- Doctors, Victims, and Medicine in Auschwitz. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1986. 102.

⁹² Fejkiel, "Ethical and Legal Limits," 110.

"block of death," or block #11 where Clauberg's subjects lived before and after he used them.

Dr. Clauberg conducted experiments himself on women from countries all over Europe. He was assisted by the chemist Dr. Gebel, S.S. NCO., orderly Binning, and several women prisoners, nurses by profession, who were compelled to give their help. Clauberg's women would first be placed on the table used for gynecological examinations. Then, after writing down general gynecological data of the patient, he would insert a catheter into the uterus. He then injected a special milky-white liquid mixed with a Roentgen contrast (to enable the checking of the liquid by means of x-ray). The chemicals, known as "Gebel's liquids," were often extracts of a North American plant called *Caladium Seguinum*. The effect hoped for was sterilization through the "sealing up" of the woman's oviducts. The treatment was repeated every three to six weeks.⁹³ The women were completely unaware that they were being sterilized; they were quite cognizant, however, of the extremely painful symptoms. Dr. Alina Brewda, a prisoner functionary, revealed how women were effected:

At first, there was inflammation of the vaginal area caused by the introduction of the irritating liquid. Strong caustic chemicals introduced into the uterine cavity, the oviducts, and the peritoneum of the small pelvis resulted in an inflammatory state of the organs. More sensitive women (especially if the solution was of a higher concentration) even succumbed to gangrene of the corresponding part of the genital tract and the peritoneum.⁹⁴

She also recalled how there were many cases of high fevers, violent shivering, and heavy uterine bleeding resulting from infections caused by both the unsanitary conditions under which Dr. Clauberg worked and by his sadistic tendencies. He would often force the women to get off the table and run around the room naked after he was through with the procedure. "Clauberg most certainly made the women do [this] for his

⁹³ Ibid, 111.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 114.

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sadistic pleasure and their degrading humiliation.⁹⁵

applied to
Yet sterilization was not the project of solely Dr. Clauberg, *Reichsfuhrer*
who presided over
Heinrich Himmler and his personal administrative officer, Rudolf Brandt, propagated
to further his efforts
Glauberg's work. Dr. Glauberg, in a top secret letter to Himmler on the sterilization of
female Jews dated June 7, 1943, reported his progress:

The method I contrived, to achieve the sterilization of the female organism without any operation is as good as perfected. It can be performed by a single injection from the entrance of the uterus in the course of the usual customary gynecological examination known to any physician.

When Himmler asked how much time it would take to sterilize 1000 Jewesses, he replied:

By one adequately trained physician in one adequately equipped place with perhaps 10 assistants (the number of assistants in conformity with the desired acceleration) most likely several hundred-- if not even 1000 per day.⁹⁶

Other doctors also frequented block #10 in Auschwitz I. Chief Garrison Surgeon, Dr. Edward Wirths, also a gynecologist before the War, controlled an experimental group of about forty women. He examined their cervix and later removed segments of the uterus for histological examination. The ~~complication of such a~~
procedure
procedure ~~was~~ strong and painful bleeding. Dr. Horst Schumann specialized in the sterilization of males by x-ray radiation and castration, ~~yet~~ *and* he also subjected females to the procedure as well. He ~~operated on many women in block #21 to remove their ovaries to see what radiation had done to them.~~
*operated on many women in block #21 to remove their ovaries to see what radiation had done to them.*⁹⁷

In addition to the medical experiments that the S.S. "justified," there were many more that were performed for sadistic pleasure. Ella Lingens-Reiner, a German and "Aryan" medical doctor at Birkenau incarcerated for helping Jews flee abroad, told of

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Nuremberg Document No. 212. In Mendelsohn, John, ed. Medical Experiments on Jewish Inmates of Concentration Camps. Vol. 9 of The Holocaust Encyclopedia. New York: Garland Publishing, 1982. 162.

⁹⁷ Fertig, 86.

one such experiment:

One day, 350 women in the camp were "selected." While awaiting their transport to the gas-chamber, an S.S. doctor shut them all up in a tiny room with no sanitary arrangements. They were already crossed off the camp list and received neither food nor water. Three days later, the S.S. doctor returned to observe their condition. They were still alive...their condition was undescrivable.⁹⁸

The S.S. also tested the spread of infections, as Dr. Clauberg did when he ordered his women to jump off the table and run around the room, and the effects of extreme temperatures and pressures. Dr. Helmuth Walderman Vetter was notorious for his unethical and unjustified experiments. Assigned to Auschwitz from 1942 to 1944, Dr. Vetter worked in block #20 in Auschwitz I, the block for prisoners with contagious diseases. He gave both men and women typhus, typhoid fever, diarrhea, tuberculosis of the lungs, and scarlet fever, often just to see the full effect of toxic inoculations. He even once tested the susceptibility of Russian men and women to frostbite. Since they were from an arctic region, he ^{presumed that} figured ^{his} they would last longer than other prisoners when submerged naked in vats of freezing cold ice water.⁹⁹ His victims, who all died roughly at the same rate, proved him wrong.

The women who were used by the Nazi doctors as the subjects of medical experimentation suffered greatly; 90% of them died in excruciating pain from infection aggravated by starvation and the unsanitary conditions of the "hospitals; they wound up in.¹⁰⁰ There was ^{no} no medicines administered to Jews or enemies of the State that were already in short supply and badly needed for German soldiers fighting the war. Block #25 in Birkenau, ^{was} the main women's "hospital," and was, in reality, an assembly point for those en route to the gas-chambers. Dr. Lettich, a French medical student sent to Auschwitz on July 15, 1943, was attached to the camp infirmary. He described the "hospital" setting at Birkenau:

⁹⁸ Lingens-Reiner, 64.

⁹⁹ Fertig, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Aziz, Joseph Mengele, The Evil Doctor, 86.

Even from a certain distance, one caught the frightful smell of rot and waste. The block was surrounded by a wall two yards high. Once within the courtyard, an appalling spectacle came to sight. On the left, by the door, poor devils with broken legs, boils, swellings, and every infirmity imaginable. A little farther along, patients who gave the impression of being in a slightly better condition dragged themselves about. And at the end of the squalid courtyard, were the living and the dead all mixed together.¹⁰¹

Miraculously enough, there were certain S.S. doctors who made occasional humanitarian gestures and tried to remedy the "hospital" conditions. Women prisoners called Dr. Flagge, an auxiliary medical officer of about fifty years old, "daddy" because he tried to relieve their misery in every possible way. He often slipped them extra rations and excused them from work when their sufferings were too great. There was also Dr. Rode, a young medical officer, who did what he could to preserve rather than to destroy life. He was, ~~however~~, ^{however} like the other S.S. and remained calm and impassive when sending Jews too weak to work to their death. These unusual men were, ^{minor} ~~however~~, the exceptions to a very unfortunate "rule."¹⁰²

In conclusion, the women who were victimized by Nazi medicine often suffered severe somatic and psychological consequences. Some women were forever unable to bear children. Many also suffered acute and chronic inflammation of the genital organs ^{and} ~~not to mention~~ ^{long after the war} inexpressible mental trauma after being "rescued" and returned to normal life after the liberation of 1945. Countless more, "besides being conscious of their cripplehood, knew that as exploited 'guinea pigs' they would be killed, which was the usual fate of all persons in the know of 'state secrets.'"¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 87.

¹⁰² Ibid, 72.

¹⁰³ Fejkiel, "Ethical and Legal Limits," 115.

Women as Victims

Immediate Liquidation

The ^{vast} majority of women who arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau were not even fortunate enough to be granted the small extension of life given to those chosen to work for the Reich or for medical experimentation. In fact, only about 4% of the female prisoners ^{remained} ~~were~~ alive twenty-four hours after selection.¹⁰⁴ Most were targeted for "immediate liquidation" and died especially horrible and frightening deaths. The S.S. no longer considered their victims human; rather, they were filthy herds of cattle to be destroyed as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Once sent to the left, victims' fates were sealed, regardless of their gender. Yet, ^{doomed} the group ~~still~~ had to march about one half-of-a-mile to one of the four killing facilities in Birkenau. In order to keep the often suspicious and worried crowds subdued, the S.S. limited the ^{use} of ~~their~~ force on the *Judenramp* to an occasional prodding with the cane. Those separated from loved ones were told that visiting day was on Sunday and that they would soon be reunited with their families. The Nazis also tried to dissipate initial fears by having the camp orchestra play when the trains arrived and by telling the thirsty masses that they would soon be treated to a hot shower and soup. Yet, all the reassuring signs disappeared once the group was marched inside the gates surrounding the gas chambers and crematoria. The scenes in the birch forest were often so horrible that the Nazis posted signs on the gates forbidding the entry of any outsider, including S.S. personnel from other parts of the camp.¹⁰⁵

Once inside, the victims were led down a winding path into a clearing. Here they would often have to wait for up to twelve hours before they were herded into the

¹⁰⁴ Fejkiel, "Starvation in Auschwitz." 130.

¹⁰⁵ Aziz, Joseph Mengele- The Evil Doctor. 67.

killing facility.¹⁰⁶ Those who were unable to walk from the platform were driven to the same place in a van that unloaded the occupants “dump-truck style until all those inside had slid out onto the ground in a heap.”¹⁰⁷ The ominous smell of burning flesh and hair tended to dispel any myths about the crowd’s fate. There were none of the promised amenities, only the cries of small children begging their mothers for just a few drops of water to quench their thirst. Some of the people were so desperately thirsty that they crouched on the ground to lick the dew off the grass. The Nazis, however, used this “pre-programmed suffering to deliberately paralyze their victims’ abilities to notice things and their wills to resist in order to allow the giant machinery of murder to run smoothly and at full speed.”¹⁰⁸

Before entering the underground “dressing rooms” and “showers,” the victims often chanted prayers and wept loudly. A member of the Sonderkommando, Filip Muller, wrote that “their tears were not tears of despair, but as a result of a deep religious emotion. They had put themselves in the hands of God.”¹⁰⁹ The S.S. officers would, from time to time, unobtrusively lead those causing too much commotion behind the building and shoot them in the nape of the neck with a small-caliber pistol inaudible to the others. The Nazis then led the crowd of no fewer than 1500 men, women, and children into a well-lit, white-washed changing room that was about 200 yards long with numbered hangers along the walls. S.S. *Obersturmfuhrer* Hossler would then give the following speech:

On behalf of the camp administration, I bid you welcome. This is not a holiday resort but a labor camp. Just as our soldiers risk their lives at the front to gain victory for the Third Reich, you will have to work here for the welfare of a new Europe. How you tackle this task is entirely up to you. The chance is there for every one of you. We shall look after your health, and we shall also offer you well-paid work. After the war we shall assess everyone according to his merits and treat him accordingly. Now would you all please get undressed. Hang your clothes on the hooks we have

¹⁰⁶ Hellman, 81.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 157.

¹⁰⁹ Muller, 75.

provided and please remember your number [of the hook]. When you've had your bath there will be a bowl of soup and coffee or tea for all. Oh yes, before I forget, after your bath, please have your certificates, diplomas, school reports, and any other documents so that we can employ everybody according to his ability. Would diabetics who are not allowed sugar report to staff after their baths.¹¹⁰

The same words were written on signs posted all over the room in numerous languages since the speech was only given in German. Many were confused and often times "women would suddenly give the most terrible shrieks while undressing, or tear their hair, or scream like maniacs...and would call down every imaginable curse upon the S.S."¹¹¹

Ten minutes later, the Nazis herded the naked crowd into the "bath and disinfection room." Down the center, every thirty yards or so, was a row of columns that rose from the floor to the ceiling. In reality, they were square, perforated, metal tubes. Then the S.S. ordered all camp personnel out, counted them, shut the huge metal doors, and turned off all the lights. From the outside, Nazis arrived in a truck bearing the Red Cross insignia. They approached several chimneys that rose from out of the ground, opened four small green metal boxes containing Xyclon-B, put on gas masks, and proceeded to dump the poison down the small openings.¹¹²

Those ^{who} ~~that~~ were closest to the columns, about one-third of the people, died instantly. Others suffocated, cried out, and scrambled to the top of the heap in an attempt to fight off their inevitable deaths. Most of the men, women, and children were dead within seven minutes, but the S.S. left the room sealed for twenty just to be sure. After the murdering was complete, the gas was evacuated from the room and the *Sonderkommando* entered. The weakest, usually women and children, were on the bottom of the heap while the strongest were sprawled out on top. Filip Muller wrote that "with bleeding noses and mouths, swollen, deformed, and with darkened faces,

¹¹⁰ Muller, 71.

¹¹¹ Hellman, 92.

¹¹² Aziz, Joseph Mengele- The Evil Doctor. 128.

they were already unrecognizable.”¹¹³

The prisoner functionaries, wearing gas masks and high rubber boots, then surrounded the pile of lifeless bodies and inundated them with powerful hoses. This was the “bath of the dead” made necessary by the involuntary defecation and blood. Some pregnant women were found to have given birth in their last moment of life. The corpses were tied by the wrists, put on automatic elevators twenty-five at a time, and hoisted to the ground-level incineration room. Before being cremated in one of the fifteen high-speed ovens, the *Sonderkommando* cut off all hair and extracted dental gold. The Nazis melted down twenty to twenty-five pounds of dental gold per day. The bodies took about twelve minutes to burn completely before the next batch was ready; 20,000 corpses were disposed of in this fashion every day.¹¹⁴

From the Spring of 1943, the dead could not be disposed of fast enough in the crematoria. As a result, the camp command took steps to augment the machinery of murder. Under the direction of *Hauptscharfuhrer* Otto Moll, trenches were dug in which bodies were stacked with alternating layers of firewood. Since there were no fans to stoke the fires, Moll designed a series of channels at the bottom of the pits into which the rendered fat would drop. The channels then slanted downward toward the end of each pit, where the fat was collected and poured back on the bodies as additional fuel.¹¹⁵ The pits were also places where the S.S. executed thousands of prisoners when the gas chambers were too backed up. Prisoner functionaries would drag women and children by the arms to an S.S. marksman waiting fifteen yards from the fiery pit. They were shot and often tossed into the conflagration while still alive. Filip Muller noted how “the daily turnover of the braziers was five to six thousand prisoners per day which made them more efficient than a crematory...it was the most horrible

¹¹³ Muller, 83.

¹¹⁴ Aziz, *Joseph Mengele- The Evil Doctor*. 132.

¹¹⁵ Hellman, 149.

death possible."¹¹⁶

Before January 1, 1945, the Nazis had systematically exterminated some one hundred twenty-five million women, three and a half million people in all, in the once calm and serene birch woods of Auschwitz.

¹¹⁶ Muller, 115.

Conclusion

Between 1942 and 1945, the Nazis systematically exterminated some three and a half million people at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Roughly 12% were selected for work-- 4% were women and 8% were men. The very small minority of women selected to serve the Reich as either slaves or prisoner functionaries experienced ineffable conditions of horror, filth, disease, starvation, and cruelty. Yet some of these women managed to retain their dignity, pride, and sense of humanity long enough to be liberated and bear witness to the world. Resistance networks were quite prevalent among the women of Birkenau partially due to a feminine cohesiveness that, unlike most male prisoners, served to bind women together and strengthen their numbers. Women were only treated differently because of their gender ^{Only} when the S.S. doctors selected them for medical experimentation. ^{were} Because they were women, the Nazis targeted them for sterilization and other ^{barbaric experiments related to} frightening child-bearing related-experiments. In the end, however, most women died. They died from sadistic beatings inflicted upon them by the S.S. They died from starvation and disease. They died from drugs, poisons, and unethical medical practices. Worst of all, they died undignified, cold, and horrible deaths in the gas-chambers. All of their screams, cries, professions, and pleas of "never again" will, however, hopefully be forever heard and never silenced.

Appendix

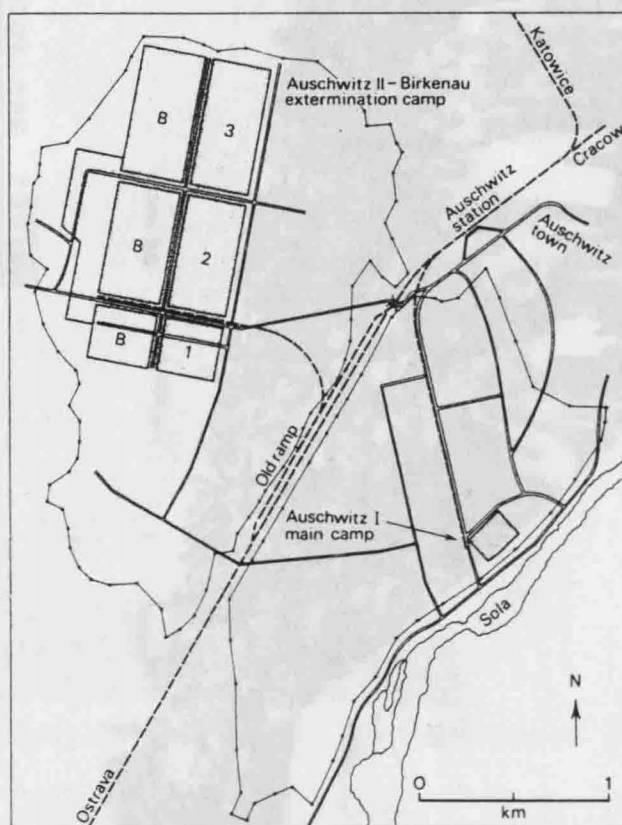


A Map of Europe Showing the Location of KL-Auschwitz-Birkenau

source: Nahon, Marco, MD. Birkenau-The Camp of Death.
Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of
Alabama Press, 1989. i.

Camp plans

source: Müller, Filip. Eyewitness Auschwitz- Three Years In The Gas Chambers. New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1979. 173.



1 Layout of Auschwitz

Prisoners Undergoing "Selection" in 1943 on the
Judenramp at Birkenau

source: Hellman, Peter. The Auschwitz Album- A Book
Based Upon An Album Discovered By A
Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili
Meier. New York: Random House, 1981. 22





At a student at the University of Munich, Mengele studied philosophy and earned a doctorate in that field before going on to medical school.



Mengele in a profile photograph taken around 1940.

source: Astor, Gerald. The "Last" Nazi- The Life And Times of Dr. Joseph Mengele. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1985. 21, 90.



S.S. General Oswald Pohl, assistant to Heinrich Himmler



Rudolf Höss, Commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau

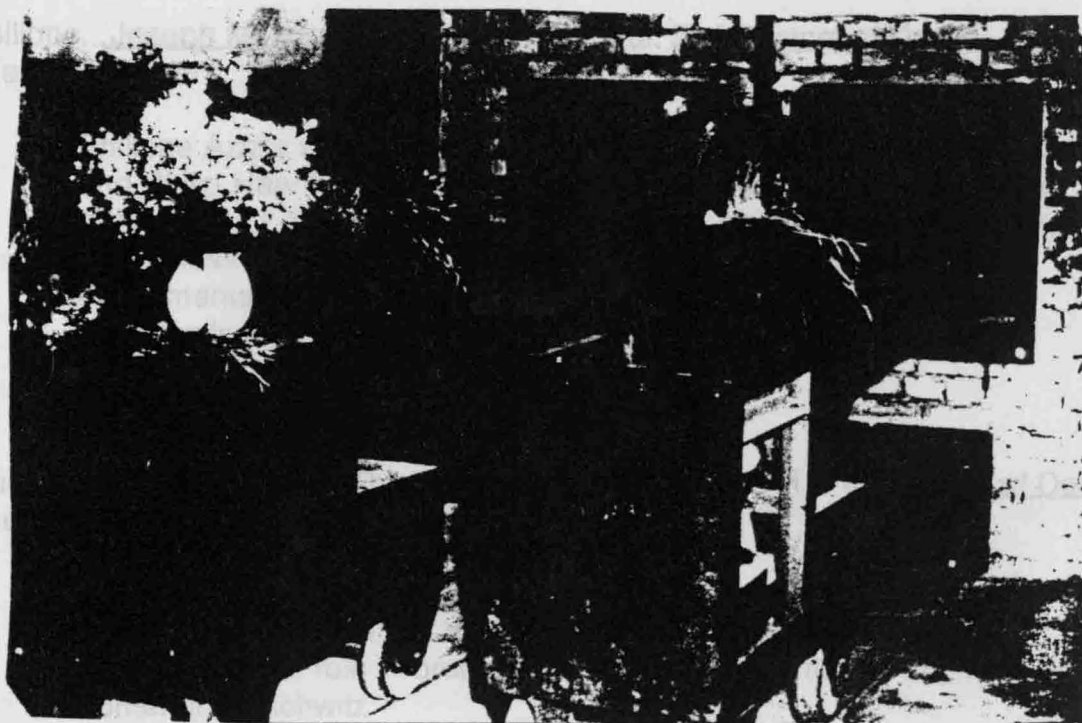


Dr. D. Carl Clauberg

source: Aziz, Philippe. Joseph Mengele, The Evil Doctor.
Vol. 2 of Doctors of Death. Geneva: Ferni
Publishers, 1976. 129.

Annotated Bibliography

I. Primary Sources: Eyewitness Testimonies



Berkowitz, Sarah Bick. *Where Are My Brothers?* New York: Harbinger Press, 1985.

Sarah Berkowitz was only fourteen years old when the Nazis rounded up her small Jewish community, then in the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, and sent them all to Auschwitz-Birkenau for liquidation. Only she and her mother were "spared," but they were separated by work squads and didn't find each other until after the war. Sarah performed many tasks in the camp, including running the crematorium. She describes in detail about what was going on in Auschwitz, what she saw, and what she felt.

Carts on tracks carried the bodies of gassing victims into the batteries of ovens in the crematoria

source: Astor, Gerald. The "Last" Nazi- The Life And Times of Dr. Joseph Mengele. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1985. 90.

Brenbaum, Halina. *Where Are My Brothers?* New York: Harbinger Press, 1985.

Annotated Bibliography

I. Primary Sources/ Eyewitness Testimonies

Aziz, Philippe. Joseph Mengele, The Evil Doctor. Vol. 2 of Doctors of Death. Geneva: Ferni Publishers, 1976.

Philippe Aziz's work was translated from the French by Edouard Bizub and Philip Haentzier under the guidance of Linda Marie De Turenne. Although Aziz is not a survivor of Auschwitz, his work contains many eyewitness testimonies about women as the subjects of medical experimentation and as victims in the gas-chambers. Volume 2 specifically deals with the "angel of death," Dr. Joseph Mengele.

Aziz, Philippe. Karl Brandt, The Third Reich's Man In White. Vol. 1 of Doctors of Death. Geneva: Ferni Publishers, 1976.

In this first volume, Philippe Aziz reviews Nazi plans for "the final solution." He also tells of Karl Brandt, the Reich's "Minister of Public Health," and his role in ordering medical experimentation on men and women in Auschwitz.

Berkowitz, Sarah Bick. Where Are My Brothers? New York: Helios Press, 1965.

Sarah Berkowitz was only fourteen years old when the Nazis rounded up her small Jewish community, then in the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, and sent them all to Auschwitz-Birkenau for liquidation. Only she and her mother were "spared," yet they were separated by work squads and didn't find each other until after the camp's liberation. Sarah performed many tasks for the S.S. including working in the sewing room and running messages for the Kapos. Her testimony provided information about what growing up in Auschwitz was like without any family.

Birenbaum, Halina. Hope is the Last to Die. New York: Twane Publishers, 1971.

Halina Birenbaum's testimony, translated by David Welsh, ^{tells} of the horrors of working and living in Birkenau as a Jew performing hard labor for the Nazis. Halina was subjected to the worst tortures, yet managed to survive until the camp liberation in 1945 partly due to the fact that her ^{husb?} family remained hidden by Polish farmers until the summer of 1944. Halina spent most of her time in the factories outside of the camp interest zone.

Buber-Neumann, Margarete. Under Two Dictators. New York: Dodd and Mead, 1949.

Margarete was a German who was sent to Auschwitz for aiding in the escape of her close Jewish friends. Because she spoke German, she worked in Auschwitz I under Dr. Clauberg as his assistant from 1943 to 1945. Her testimony, translated by Edward Fitzgerald, ~~told of the horrible~~ atrocities performed on women and men under her "dictator" the *Herr Docktor*.

Delbo, Charlotte. None of Us Will Return. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1968.

Charlotte Delbo joined the resistance movement at the very beginning of the Nazi occupation of France, together with her husband, Georges Dudach. Both were arrested in Paris on March 2, 1942 by the French police and handed over to the Gestapo. Dudach was shot on May 23, 1942 at Mont Valerien. Charlotte was first imprisoned in La Sante and Fort de Romainville and was deported to Auschwitz in January 1943. She recounts her camp experiences in prose and poetry.

Des Pres, Terrence. The Survivor- An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Terrence Des Pres compiled extensive interviews with survivors from many of the Nazi death camps throughout Europe while he was a Junior Fellow at Harvard in 1975. The book ~~had~~ an excellent bibliography of both primary and secondary sources which provided valuable suggestions for further research.

Fejkiel, Wladyslaw. "Ethical and Legal Limits of Experimentation in Medicine in Connection With Professor Clauberg's Affair." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982.

Wladyslaw Fejkiel, a former prisoner of KL-Auschwitz, is now a professor of the Academy of Medicine in Cracow, Poland. His essay on medical experimentation primarily dealt with those experiments conducted by Professor Carl Clauberg in Block No. 10 in Auschwitz I, who aimed at finding a quick method of biological extermination of Hitler's "undesirables." His experiments dealt with Jewish women, many of whom had perished. His work provided valuable information about the women who suffered outside of Auschwitz II- Birkenau.

Fejkiel, Wladyslaw. "Starvation in Auschwitz." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982.

Wladyslaw Fejkiel, a survivor of Auschwitz, presented pertinent information about the daily caloric intake of forced laborers and prisoner functionaries. His essay on starvation was more a testimony of horrors than a scholarly article. Nonetheless, his work was a moving factual account of how the Nazis exterminated prisoners through hard labor.

Ferderber-Salz, Bertha. And the Sun Kept Shining. New York: Holocaust Library, Inc., 1980.

Bertha Ferderber-Salz was brought to Auschwitz in February of 1944. She was sent to Birkenau to perform hard labor for the Reich. Her testimony provided information about the selection process and methods of extermination through work the S.S. used on the prisoners.

Fertig, Howard, ed. From the History of KL-Auschwitz. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982.

This book was a compilation of essays and articles written by both men and women and edited by Howard Fertig. Together, the separate endeavors formed a comprehensive primary resource relating the history and horrors of KL-Auschwitz. Kazimierz Smolen, MA. provided brilliant insights concerning the establishment and development of the camp. Krystyna Michalik, Ph.D. translated the text from Polish.

Garlinski, Jozef. Fighting Auschwitz- The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp. London, England: Julian Friedmann Publishers Ltd., 1975.

Jozef Garlinski was imprisoned in Auschwitz in 1943. He had belonged to the Polish underground. Although most of his book was devoted to the underground movement that existed among prisoners in Auschwitz, he included an insightful chapter on the women's camp and medical experimentation.

Gitta, Sereny. Into That Darkness. New York: McGraw Hill, 1974.

Sereny Gitta was a teenager when she arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau. She wrote a collection of poems and stream-of-consciousness essays of her camp experiences. She was a privileged kitchen-worker for a time and also a maid for the S.S. until her liberation in 1945.

Hart, Kitty. I Am Alive. New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1962.

Kitty Hart is a Polish Jew who, with her mother, was sentenced to death in Auschwitz, yet both she and her mother managed to survive. She explained in her work how survival required a commitment to hope and a willingness to adapt to new conditions of life. She told of her adopted "family" group in the camp and provided insights into the solidarity that existed among women in Birkenau.

Hellman, Peter, ed. The Auschwitz Album- A Book Based Upon an Album Discovered by a Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili Meier. New York: Random House, 1981.

This book was based on an album discovered by Auschwitz survivor, Lili Meier. Rare photographs taken by the assistant *Unterscharfuhrer* or "outside photographer" Ernst Hofmann, an officer of the S.S., of forbidden and concealed sights of the selection process at Birkenau were compiled with a narrative by Peter Hellman to provide a chilling portrayal and factual history of the men, women, and children victimized by the Third Reich. The album was discovered in a German camp called Dora.

upon liberation by the Allied forces on April 11, 1945.

Klein, Gerda Weissman. All But My Life. New York: Hilland Wang, 1957.

Gerda Weissman Klein was fifteen when the Nazis invaded her hometown in Poland in 1939. She was used as slave labor in Auschwitz and eventually married Lt. Kurt Klein, the American soldier who liberated her in 1945.

Kogon, Eugen. The Theory and Practice of Hell. New York: Octagon Books, 1973.

Eugen Kogon's work, translated from German by Heinz Norden, gives extremely insightful information about Nazi concentration camps and the system behind them. Dr. Kogon was an Austrian writer and editor by trade before he was arrested as one of the first opponents of the Reich. He was first sent to Buchenwald and was later transferred to Auschwitz. He includes chapters on prisoner categories, food, sanitation and health, and statistics of mortality. It is a must read for any student of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

Kraus, Ota and Erich Kulka. The Death Factory: Document on Auschwitz. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1966.

The work of Kraus and Kulka was translated from Czech by Stephen Jolly. The authors were prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau nearly the whole time it served as the main German extermination camp. In 1945, shortly after their liberation, they prepared this "document on Auschwitz" using accounts of other prisoners as well as evidence they had been able to collect and preserve as locksmiths for the camp. Ota Kraus also gave her own personal testimony on what it was like to be a female prisoner functionary.

Lengyel, Olga. Five Chimneys: The Story of Auschwitz. Chicago, Illinois: Ziff-Davis, 1947.

Olga Lengyel arrived at Auschwitz with in 1943 from Transylvania in Rumania. She worked in the Birkenau infirmary for women prisoners under the infamous Dr. Klein, the predecessor of Dr. Joseph Mengele as

the camp's chief doctor. Her testimony reveals alot about the privileges of being an "Aryan" and non-Jewish prisoner functionary.

Lingens-Reiner, Ella. Prisoners of Fear. London, England: Victor Gollancz, 1948.

Ella Lingens-Reiner was an "Aryan" German woman sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau for being an opponent of the Reich and for helping Jews flee from the country. She served as a nurse under Ena Weiss in the camp hospital and performed numerous other tasks for the Nazis. Her testimony was a rich source about the psychology of survival among female prisoners as well as the atrocities they suffered under the Nazi doctors.

Maurel, Micheline. An Ordinary Camp. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958.

Micheline Maurel was deported to Ravensbruck on July 10, 1943. She had been separated from her family and husband in Czechoslovakia. Micheline, just twenty years old at the time, was then sent to Auschwitz where she served the Reich in Birkenau by working in the farmlands outside of the camp. She survived until liberation just a year and a half later. Her testimony is translated by Margaret S. Summers.

Mendelsohn, John, ed. Medical Experiments on Jewish Inmates of Concentration Camps. Vol. 9 of The Holocaust Encyclopedia. New York: Garland Publishing, 1982.

John Mendelsohn compiled primary documents, letters, affidavits, and memorandums from Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps around Europe. Most of the documents were used in the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials and were published with permission from the United States National Archives. The original papers in German appear along with English translations and summaries. Included were letters from Himmler to Dr. Clauberg on the sterilization of Jewish females and on other experiments with women.

Micheels, Louis J., MD. Doctor # 117641- A Holocaust Memoir. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989.

Both Dr. Micheels and his fiancée Nora were medical students in the

Netherlands before they were arrested by the Nazis for being Jews. In 1945, both he and Nora were sent to Auschwitz. Serving the S.S. and prisoners, Dr. Micheels presented a testimony that recounted some of the medical atrocities performed on the women of Auschwitz.

Muller, Filip. Eyewitness Auschwitz- Three Years in the Gas Chambers. New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1979.

Filip Muller's book is a unique and moving eyewitness testimony about the Jewish people who died in Nazi gas-chambers. Muller arrived in Auschwitz in April 1942 and began working in the gassing installations and crematoria in May. His work provided insights into the system of prisoner functionaries and hierarchies. He also included valuable plans of the camp as part of his appendix.

Nahon, Marco, MD. Birkenau- The Camp of Death. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1989.

Dr. Nahon was a Jew of Greek nationality who arrived at Auschwitz in 1943 and worked in the camp "hospitals." His testimony was a valuable source of information about Nazi medical experimentation on women. He also provided chapters on prisoner functionaries, camp music, camp uniforms, and food rations. The text was translated from French by Jacqueline Havaux Bowers.

Perl, Gisella. I Was A Doctor In Auschwitz. New York: International Universities Press, 1948.

Gisella Perl was a German who was sent to Auschwitz for being half-Jewish. She was fortunate for possessing medical researching skills which were quite valuable to the Nazis. As a result, she was influential, powerful, and in a position to help other Jewish prisoners. Her testimony revealed much about the experience of women as the subjects of medical experimentation.

Posmysz, Zofia. "*Sangerin*." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982.

Zofia Posmysz was a former prisoner at Auschwitz. Her testimony was about "the singer" of her block and how she used her voice talents to win favor with the *Rottenfuhrer* S.S. as she performed hard labor in the camp's penal colony. It provided valuable information about the system of prisoner hierarchy. At present, Posmysz is a well-known writer.

Szmaglewska, Seweryna. Smoke Over Birkenau. New York: Henry Holt, 1947.

Seweryna Szmaglewska, in a work translated from Polish by Jadwiga Rynas, wrote a chilling testimony of performing hard labor for the Reich. Because she was a Jew, the Nazis forced her to work for a nearby coal and gravel factory located three miles outside of the camp interest zone. She provided valuable information about the psychology of her female companions and documented her horrible living conditions as a "Moslem."

Weinstock, Eugena. Beyond the Last Path. New York: Boni and Gaer, 1947.

As a Polish Jew, Eugena was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau for liquidation in 1943. She was selected for work and performed hard labor on the farms outside of the camp interest zone. Her testimony, translated by Clara Ryan, provided valuable information about camp living and working conditions as well as women's solidarity.

II. Secondary Sources

Bettelheim, Bruno. "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations." In the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Volume 38, No. 4, October 1943.

Bruno Bettelheim conducted a study of individual and mass behavior in extreme situations and used the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, many from Auschwitz, as data. It was a complex psychological analysis of such experiences, yet provided a few insightful testimonies about women's actions in the camps.

Czech, Danuta. "Most Important Events in the History of the Concentration Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982.

Danuta Czech provided an extensive and comprehensive timeline that outlined the most important events in Auschwitz starting from its construction and ending with its destruction. She wrote a comprehensive day by day history of the camp while emphasizing certain important dates.

Fertig, Howard. Nazi Medicine- Doctors, Victims, and Medicine in Auschwitz. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1986.

Howard Fertig presented a comprehensive study of Nazi medicine for the International Auschwitz Committee. It was the most valuable resource to consult about Nazi experimentation on women in Auschwitz as well as in concentration camps all over Europe.

Friedlander, Henry. "The Nazi Concentration Camps." In Human Responses to the Holocaust: Perpetrators and Victims, Bystanders and Resisters. Ed. Michael D. Ryan. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981

In his first published essay, Henry Friedlander provided valuable information about the structure of Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps as well as hierarchies among prisoners. His work was a comprehensive study that included details about many concentration camps all over Europe.

Kren, George M. and Leon Rappaport. The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behavior. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980.

Kren and Rappaport presented the Holocaust as "something new" to be understood in human history. Their work endeavored to shatter the myths of the "final solution." Their claims that traditional German anti-semitism was not a major cause of the Holocaust was amply substantiated by chapters on German ideology and character, on the S.S. as a unique institution, and on the ideas and actions of resistance.

Mosse, George L. The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964.

George L Mosse provided an insightful thesis about the intellectual origins of the Nazi empire. Mosse traced the development of the Volk, or mystical German culture through the eighteenth century and up to the Second World War. He explained how National Socialism became a reality for Hitler only through his manipulation of the mind-set of the German people-- a thought pattern that, Mosse claimed, was not instilled by the Fuhrer, but rather inherently present for centuries. It provided excellent background information on the rise and fall of the Third Reich.

Ryan, Michael D., ed. Human Responses to the Holocaust: Perpetrators and Victims. Bystanders and Resisters. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981.

This book was a compilation of essays and papers of the 1979 Bernhard E. Olson Scholars Conference on THE CHURCH STRUGGLE AND THE HOLOCAUST. It was sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews for the purpose of exploring the human responses disclosed by the Holocaust. In the book, there appeared an essay published for the first time by Henry Friedlander called "The Nazi Concentration Camps" which was extremely insightful concerning the structure of Nazi death camps and the hierarchy of Nazi administrators as well as the pecking order of both the male and female prisoners. Extensive bibliographies also provided suggestions for further research.

Smolen, Kazimierz. "The Concentration Camp Auschwitz." In From the History of KL-Auschwitz. Ed. Howard Fertig. New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1982.

Kazimierz Smolen's essay was one of the most insightful sources of information about the establishment and development of Auschwitz. Also included was information about the role of the concentration camp in realizing Hitler's program of the extermination of nations, extermination through work, direct extermination, and the structure of the organization of the camp.